

they do in West Virginia, but they have such great admiration on my side of the river for the terrific work Senator BYRD has done.

I only have 4 or 5 minutes I would like to say about Thanksgiving and the farm bill. But if Senator BYRD would like to take time before that, I am certainly willing to yield or I can proceed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I have some comments. They will be short, but I will save them for next Tuesday, which the Lord willing, at that time I will say a few things. I thank the Chair. I thank the Senator. I thank all of the Senators. I thank all the Members and the staff who make it possible for us to do our work. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Have a good Thanksgiving.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, today the Senate will break for the Thanksgiving holiday. We will all travel back to our States. We will work in our offices. We will move around our States. We will probably celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday with our families and our friends.

Many of us who are so very blessed will gather together next Thursday at tables surrounded by family, echoing with laughter, overflowing with food.

For too many families in my home State of Ohio and across the Nation next Thursday will be very different. These families, many of whom work full-time, simply do not earn enough each month to survive without the assistance of food stamps and food banks and help from churches and help from other organizations.

Too many families suffering from layoffs—layoffs caused by plant closings, the offshoring of jobs, and the downsizing of American industry—are now solely reliant on food stamps and food banks to feed their families. Adding anguish to heartache, food banks, the last hope many have for getting even just one meal a day, are finding themselves running short on food.

Yesterday's Cincinnati Enquirer told the story of Denise Arnold, a mother from Roselawn, OH, a suburb of Cincinnati. Since losing her job, and while looking for another job, Ms. Arnold has fallen behind on her rent and worries about becoming homeless. She has applied for food stamps, but that process takes time, and she has a son to feed.

Ms. Arnold visits the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry industry to get what food she can for her family. She told the reporter: It is really rough. I have been so scared. The pantry once was able to offer a week's supply of food to those in need. Now, because of budget cuts and inadequate funding, this pantry must ration out, as so many others do, to their visitors, a few days' worth at a time, not a full week.

According to yesterday's newspaper article, food pantries across the region have similar stories to report. On this floor, I have shared the story of Rhonda Stewart, a single mother from Butler County, OH, who relies on food stamps to feed her family.

Ms. Stewart bravely shared her story before the Senate Agriculture Committee several months ago as we began the process of writing the 2007 farm bill. She told us she has a young son and is fairly recently divorced. Her husband—her ex-husband—has lost his job and is not able to support the son or his former wife.

She has a full-time job, only making about \$9 an hour. She is president of the local PTA and volunteers for the Cub Scouts. She teaches Sunday school. She does everything we ask of a citizen and a parent, and she is a food stamp beneficiary.

Yet, she told us, at the beginning of the month, she and her son—she cooks pork chops once or twice that first week. That is his favorite meal. By the middle of the month, she takes him out to a fast food restaurant perhaps once or twice. By the end of the month, she always runs out of money. She sits at the dining room or the kitchen table with her son, and that last couple of days of the month at dinnertime he is eating dinner, and she is sitting there not eating.

He says: Mom, what is wrong?

She says: I am not feeling well, or I am not hungry. She said it happens month after month.

The truth is, food stamps provide a benefit of about \$1 per person per meal. So Rhonda Stewart was getting \$6 per day for food stamps. She traveled to Washington to let us know what mattered most to her and to her family and to families like hers. She had every right to expect that we would listen and we would hear her.

In 2006, more than 35 million Americans went hungry. We must ask ourselves, how many more will go hungry next Thursday and Friday and Saturday and Sunday and into the rest of the holiday season?

I raise this issue today because at this moment we are debating in this Chamber legislation that literally means the difference between food and hunger for Ms. Arnold, Ms. Stewart, and millions of families in this country, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of families in my home State of Ohio like theirs.

In a nation wealthy as ours, eradicating hunger, eliminating poverty, investing in families should not be a political issue. It is not Republican versus Democrat. It is food and shelter versus Americans who aren't as fortunate as all of us in this body, as the staff, the Senators, all of us. This is a moral obligation, a duty that flows from compassion and the very reason we have been sent here as public servants.

In November of last year, families in my State of Ohio, as they did in the

State of the Presiding Officer, sent a loud and clear message that they wanted change. They demanded in no uncertain terms that the priorities championed here in Washington better reflect their own back home. Given their call for change and the unquestionable understanding of challenges facing families across the country, one must pause and reflect on what we are actually doing here. We have a responsibility to think about the priorities being debated this week, this very day as part of the farm bill.

On the one hand, we have been arguing for weeks about how many tens of millions, sometimes hundreds of millions, an industry gets out of this bill. We have been arguing over profit margins. On the other hand, we have in this legislation language that would fund food banks by an additional \$110 million each year. We have legislation that would increase food stamp funding by \$5 billion over 5 years and would help millions of new families with food assistance. We have the opportunity in this bill to validate for Ms. Arnold and Ms. Stewart and the millions of mothers like them across the country that their voices do in fact matter. These are not issues being discussed only within these walls. This is a question of principle. It is a call to action the public understands very well. The public understands how important are the issues of hunger, social justice, investing in families, at every level of income.

I applaud Ohio food banks and businesses such as First Energy and the Kroger Company for their dedication and initiative. This year First Energy and its employees, as part of their Harvest for Hunger campaign, collected the equivalent of nearly 2 million meals. This week the Kroger Company helped jump-start a Hunger is Unacceptable campaign in greater Cincinnati.

Local social service agencies in the area are pooling resources to help fight hunger more effectively. What these stories say to me is that people back home get it. They get it in Cincinnati, in Columbus, and in Cleveland. It is time that Washington gets it.

I strongly urge my colleagues to remember that budgets and bills are more than ink on paper. They are a set of priorities, and they are about our values. I strongly encourage my colleagues not to delay in passing the farm bill and to remember how many families are depending on them for us to stand up for them.

I fully expect and encourage families back home to continue watching what we do and to hold all of us accountable for our actions.

I want to say to Ms. Arnold—with a very special mention to Rhonda Stewart—that so many of us in this Chamber hear you. We are fighting for you, and we will not give up.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Ohio for his service on the Agriculture Committee. He has brought new vision, new vigor to the committee. We very much appreciate his service there. This has been a difficult challenge, but I think we can be very proud of the result. This bill is fiscally responsible, and at the same time it does begin the orientation of priorities. It gives additional funding to not only conservation but to nutrition, where the Senator from Ohio has been a real leader. Over and over he has reminded us of not only our responsibility to fellow Americans, but a moral responsibility we have to make certain we change some of these programs that are so critically important to people all across America.

It is so often overlooked that the vast majority of the money in the farm bill, 66 percent of the funding, goes for nutrition. That is where the vast majority of the spending goes. We can be very proud of the changes that have been made. We have added over \$5 billion above the baseline for nutrition, to begin to address things that have not been changed for 30 years. The Senator from Ohio has been a leader, somebody who prodded us all to be better than we have been. I thank the Senator from Ohio for his leadership.

BUDGET FACTS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I come to the floor to respond to remarks made yesterday by the ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee. I must say, sometimes my friends on the other side of the aisle amaze me on the question of fiscal policy. Because after nearly 7 years of rubberstamping the Bush administration's completely failed fiscal policy, they are so anxious to distract attention from what they did, they now want to besmirch what we have done. We are not going to let them do that.

I have enormous respect for my colleague. He and I work together on the Budget Committee. I like him. I respect him. But it is not his right to rewrite history. The fact is, when they were in charge, as recently as last year, they couldn't even get a budget. They had no budget for the United States. They did not produce a budget, even though they controlled the House of Representatives, the White House, and the Senate. They did not produce a budget for our country. In fact, 3 of the last 5 years they didn't produce a budget for this country.

Facts are facts. Not only did they not produce a budget, they did not finish work on 10 of the 12 appropriations bills for last year. They are now complaining we have not completed this year's work. One reason is, we had to start out by doing virtually all of last year's work before we could get started on this year's work. That is a fact.

The larger reality is that Democrats not only produced a budget, they produced a budget that will balance the

books over 5 years. That is not according to my numbers or the Senate Budget Committee's numbers. That is according to the Congressional Budget Office that is nonpartisan. They are the ones who have the responsibility to make these judgments. They say our budget will balance over 5 years. The President never has produced a budget that would balance. In fact, none of his budgets come even close. In fact, he has run up record deficits and record debt and put America in a deep hole. Our friends on the other side supported every one of his misguided efforts. Facts are facts.

Let's look at the record of our colleagues. For nearly 7 years, our friends on the other side of the aisle voted lock, stock, and barrel to support the President's failed fiscal policy. The result is record debt, and the explosion in Federal debt comes at the worst possible time, just before the retirement of the baby boom generation. That has been their policy. That is their record. We on the Democratic side are working feverishly to change this failed course.

Let's be clear. Under the President's policies, the \$5.6 trillion projected surplus he inherited has been completely wiped out. Worse than that, the President's policies have driven us deep into deficit, as this chart shows. This is the record. This isn't a projection. This is what has happened under the President's policies. He inherited a surplus, in fact, a surplus so large that for 2 years we were able to stop what had gone on for 20 years, raiding Social Security to pay other bills. For 2 years under the Clinton administration, that bad habit was stopped. Instead of using Social Security money to pay other bills, we were able to actually pay down debt. That is a fact. That is not an imagining. That is not a political claim. That is historic fact.

Here is the record of our friends on the other side. Here is what happened to spending they controlled. Make no mistake, they controlled it completely. They controlled the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the White House. Here is what happened to spending. It went from \$1.9 trillion a year to \$2.7 trillion a year on their watch. And they accuse us of being big spenders? Excuse me? This is their record. This is what they did. They ran up the spending in the country by 50 percent. But it didn't end there. Here is what they did on the revenue side. On the revenue side, real revenues have been stagnant during the entire time of this administration. They will show you a very different chart. They will show you not real revenues, which are adjusted for inflation; they will show you a chart that only looks at the last 3 years, and they will do it not adjusted for inflation. So the last 3 years they will show a big increase in revenue. But we all know that is not an apples-to-apples comparison, and we all know that neglects to point out what has happened over the whole period of their control.

Over the whole period of their control, there has been virtually no in-

crease in the real revenues, the inflation-adjusted revenues of the country. They have been flat, as this chart shows.

What is the result? If you dramatically increase spending and revenue is flat, what happens? The debt explodes. That is precisely what has happened with our colleagues on the other side in control. They walked in here with a debt at the end of the first year of the President's tenure at \$5.8 trillion. We don't hold them responsible for the first year, because they are working on the budget of the previous President. But look what has happened to the debt. They have run it up \$3 trillion in these last 6 years. They have run up the debt to a fare-thee-well. And increasingly, it is foreign-held debt. That is, we are increasingly dependent on the kindness of strangers to finance this incredible borrowing binge our colleagues on the other side have taken this country on.

When they came into office, we had a trillion dollars of U.S. debt held abroad. That is now over \$2 trillion. They have more than doubled foreign holdings of U.S. debt in this short period of time from 2001 to 2007.

They then go after the spending that is in our budget. Let me be clear. We pay for our spending. We balance the books in 5 years. If you look at total spending, there is virtually no difference between what the President proposed and what we proposed. The difference is seven-tenths of 1 percent.

Where did we propose spending some additional money?

We proposed not to spend more money in Iraq. We proposed to spend more money right here at home on critical domestic priorities, in three areas: No. 1, aid to our veterans and their health care; No. 2, children's health care; and, No. 3, education.

Those are the priorities of the American people. Those are the priorities that will make a significant difference to our country over time: more money for education so people can go to college, so they can come out with less debt, so parents can afford to help their kids get the best education they can; more money for veterans health care to keep the promise that was made to veterans when we sent them in harm's way; more money for children's health care so we begin to cover children with health insurance. That is a good investment because if you are able to help a child lead a healthier life, that is an investment that pays off over a lifetime.

But more than that, Democrats adopted a rule that we call pay-go. What pay-go says is simply this: If you want more tax cuts or more mandatory spending, you can do it, but you can only do it if you pay for it. In the Senate we adopted the rule that new mandatory spending and tax cuts must be offset, must be paid for, or that you get a supermajority.

Now let me be clear: Pay-go is working. My colleague on the other side